

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 GENEVA 03717

LONDON FOR ATHERTON PARTY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR')

FOLLOWING IS TRANSCRIPT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON'S
REMARKS TO THE PRESS AFTER HIS MEETING WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER SAUD IN GENEVA:

Q. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR DEALING WITH PRINCE SAUD?

A. WELL, LET ME MAKE A FEW GENERAL REMARKS IN RESPONSE
TO THAT. I JUST HAVE HAD AN HOUR AND HALF WITH HIS
HIGHNESS PRINCE SAUD. YOU ALL KNOW THAT THE UNITED
STATES HAS VERY LONG STANDING AND SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS
WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND IT IS QUITE USUAL FOR US OVER THE
YEARS TO EXCHANGE VIEWS AND CONSULT ON A WIDE RANGE OF
ISSUES OF MATTERS OF COMMON INTEREST. THE SAUDI GOVERN-
MENT HAS BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF THE EFFORTS OF THE UNITED
STATES TO HELP BRING ABOUT A JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN
THE MIDDLE EAST AND MY STOP -- THIS WAS AN OCCASION TO
BRING THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA UP TO DATE ON THE
CURRENT STATUS ABOUT THE EFFORTS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS.
I HAD SUGGESTED GOING TO SAUDI ARABIA, BUT HIS HIGHNESS
THOUGHT IT WAS MORE CONVENIENT TO MEET HERE AND I AM
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VERY GRATEFUL TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY. I BRIEFED HIM
ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE EXXRESSED
INTEREST IN HIM BEING KEPT INFORMED AND REAFFIRMED THAT
THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA CONTINUES TO HOPE THAT
OUR EFFORTS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.

Q. HAS THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA INDICATED

SATISFACTION WITH THE PROGRESS IN THE TALKS OR LACK UP TO NOW?

A. I WOULD RATHER REALLY LEAVE IT UP TO PRINCE SAUD TO EXPRESS THE SAUDI POSITION OVER THE ISSUE, BUT I HAVE JUST SAID, WHICH IS THAT HE DID REAFFIRM SAUDI HOPE THAT OUR EFFORTS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.

Q. ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE PROGRESS OF THE TALKS?

A. I THINK THAT WE HAVE MOVED -- NARROWED SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES ON THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE, WHICH IS THE PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF THE EFFORTS THAT I HAVE BEEN MAKING. THERE IS STILL MUCH WORK TO BE DONE, BUT I THINK WE KEPT THE PROCESS MOVING. WE ESTABLISHED THAT THERE SHOULD BE CONTINUITY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE PROCESS. I AM GOING RIGHT NOW FOR THE VISIT TO WASHINGTON OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, WHICH IS A VERY IMPORTANT NEXT STEP IN THIS PROCESS. I WILL BE COMING BACK - GOING BACK TO THE MIDDLE EAST FOR SOME POINTS, AFTER GETTING INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY VANCE.

Q. IS THERE ANY DANGER THAT THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO BACK ON RESOLUTION 224?

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A. YOU MEAN RESOLUTION 242.

OH YES, 242. SORRY.

A. WELL, THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF ISRAEL ADDRESSED THE OTHER DAY, REAFFIRMED ISRAEL'S CONTINUED ADHERENCE TO RESOLUTION 242 TO THE NEGOTIATION, BUT I THINK THERE ARE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RESOLUTION. THIS IS ONE OF THE QUESTIONS WHICH OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT BUT THERE HAS BEEN RECENT REAFFIRMATION THAT ISRAEL WOULD ADHERE TO RESOLUTION 242 AS THE BASIS FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS.

Q. MR. BEGIN JUST YESTERDAY RE-INTERPRETED THAT THE WEST BANK WAS NOT INCLUDED IN HIS VIEW IN 242, BUT IS ONE OF THE AREAS WHICH ISRAEL MIGHT HAVE TO WITHDRAW.

A. YES, WELL I THINK THAT THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS ON THE RECORD RECENTLY AND THEY SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

Q. YOU ARE STOPPING IN LONDON TOMORROW, I BELIEVE.

A. I WILL BE STOPPING IN LONDON. I WILL BE MEETING WITH MR. MICHAEL WEIR WHO IS MY COUNTERPART IN THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE FOR ONE OF THE REGULAR EXCHANGES THAT WE HAVE WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ON OUR COMMON INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

Q. YOU SAID YESTERDAY, MR. ATHERTON, THAT BOTH SIDES, ISRAEL AND THE ARABS, MUST MAKE CONCRETE STEPS. WHAT CONCRETE STEPS DO YOU THINK THE ARABS MUST TAKE?

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LONDON FOR ATHERTON PARTY

A. WELL, I THINK THIS IS NOT REALLY THE OCCASION FOR ME TO GET INTO THE SPECIFICS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. THERE HAVE BEEN CLEARLY SOME ADVANCES ON SOME OF THE KEY ISSUES. THERE HAS BEEN AN OBVIOUS EFFORT BY PRESIDENT SADAT TO VISIT ISRAEL, HIS EVIDENT WILLINGNESS TO MAKE PEACE WITH ISRAEL, TO ESTABLISH NORMAL RELATIONS. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT STEP. THERE ARE STILL DIFFERENCES OVER SOME OF THE DETAILS, THE PRECISE LANGUAGE IN THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. AND THERE IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE SOME ACCOMMODATION ON BOTH SIDES. BUT I HAVE FOR THE LAST TWO AND A HALF WEEKS VERY SUCCESSFULLY AVOIDED DISCUSSING WHAT THE PRECISE DETAILS OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS ARE. I THINK IN THE INTEREST OF THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES I AM AFRAID I WILL HAVE TO AVOID GETTING INTO THIS SPECIFIC ISSUE.

Q. I HAVE A LAST QUESTION. (INAUDIBLE)

A. I AM SATISFIED THAT THE PROCESS HAS BEEN KEPT GOING
AND THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP GOING. I DON'T WANT
TO TRY TO CHARACTERIZE EVERY PHASE OF IT IN TERMS OF
WHERE IT LEADS US. BUT THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THERE
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IS A PROCESS HERE, THAT THERE IS AN ON-GOING PROCESS AND
THAT THE PARTIES INVOLVED HAVE ALL REAFFIRMED THEIR
COMMITMENT TO KEEP THE PROCESS GOING.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH. VANDEN HEUVEL

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